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Pair creating Jefferson County library of outdoor gear

By Evan Cael, Peninsula Daily News

PORT TOWNSEND - Port Townsend native Joss Whittaker - inspired by growing up in a famous "climbing family" - wants to make it as easy as possible for others to experience the mountains, rivers, lakes, coastline and forests of Jefferson County and the surrounding area.

That's why the 23-year-old and his friend, Danny Milholland of Port Townsend, are establishing Outdoor Collective, a service that lends outdoor equipment for free.

"I started thinking what would be useful to people in Jefferson County that would get them more involved in the outdoors," Whittaker said.

"It's really a privilege we have, to be able to go out and have [nature] that accessible."

Outdoors knowledge

Whittaker knows the outdoors, having grown up as the son of Jim Whittaker, the first American to climb to the 29,028-foot summit of Mount Everest.

"Climbing was just something we did," the younger Whittaker said on Thursday.

"I didn't think it was anything unusual."

He remembers one climb with his family up Pinnacle Peak when he was 6 years old.

"The summit is a bit of a spire," he said.

He and his brother, Leif, who was 5 years old, climbed up a rope to the top.

"When we got up to the summit, it was spectacular and terrifying," said Whittaker.

"We were up on this rocky spire. Below us were all these mountains. "

He said it was a moment of "realizing our human vulnerability in nature and at the same time realizing that even if we were vulnerable, we had gotten there.

"The mountain had allowed us to climb it."

That's what he hopes to help others have - experiences that "you can't really put into words."





"It's an important experience to have."

Volunteer now

A recent graduate of Brown University in Providence, R.I., Whittaker returned to Port Townsend in the AmeriCorps program of the Washington Conservation Corps.

He is working with the Jefferson Conservation District and North Olympic Salmon Coalition before he goes to graduate school to study archeology.

"I wanted to do something that was different from college and from archeology," he said.

He created Outdoor Collective to fulfill an AmeriCorps requirement for a community service project.

He and Milholland - who once put together a similar project and who volunteered to help Whittaker with the fundraising - are organizing a fundraiser on Saturday to help the program get off the ground.

"The local businesses were very generous," Milholland said.

The proceeds will go to administration costs of Outdoor Collective and to buy new outdoor equipment for the program.

Most of the equipment, Whittaker expects, will be donated.

Those attending the event are encouraged to bring outdoor equipment to donate.

The program will be housed the Port Townsend Recreation Center on Taylor Street.

A FUNDRAISER ON Saturday for Outdoor Collective will be held at Rosewind Common House, 3121 Haines St., Port Townsend.

From 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. will be a silent auction of locally donated artwork, woodwork, jewelry and gift certificates.

Dinner will begin at 6 p.m., with food and drinks provided.

Live music is planned until midnight.

The proceeds will go to administration costs of Outdoor Collective and to buy new outdoor equipment for the program.

For information about Saturday's event, phone Danny Milholland at 360-385-2335.

To donate equipment, volunteer or for more information about Outdoor Collective, phone Whittaker at 360-531-3057.

Managing Editor/News Leah Leach contributed to this report.

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